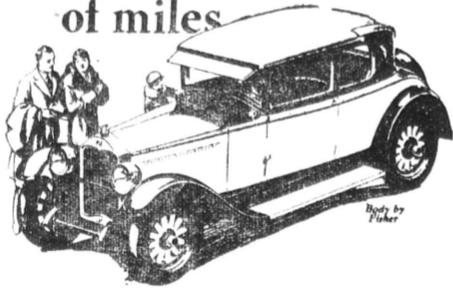


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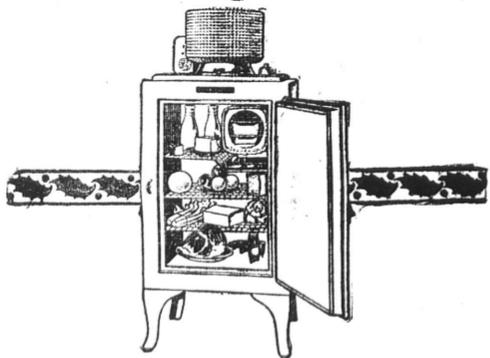
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THE OWENS VALLEY DISPUTE

The Story of Owens Valley, Its Dealings With the City of Los Angeles and the Dynamiting Attacks Upon the City's Aqueduct

By DON J. KINSEY

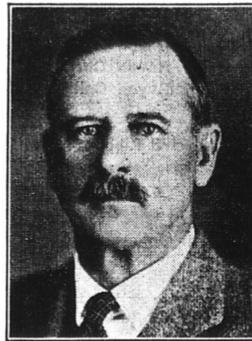
(Editor's Note—This is the eleventh of a series of short articles revealing the facts in connection with the Los Angeles-Owens Valley water controversy. This series is published by the Los Angeles Bureau of Water, Power and Light.)

Throughout the 14 years of negotiations and strife between the city of Los Angeles and the people of Owens Valley that have followed the completion of the Aqueduct, two men have stood out conspicuously and continuously as the leaders of those who have opposed the plans and policies of the city. These two men are Wilfred W. and Mark Q. Watterson.

Brothers and business associates, the two Wattersons for many years owned and operated the five banking institutions in Owens Valley. In addition to their banking monopoly, the Wattersons also were engaged

in divers commercial and industrial enterprises. Through the medium of Watterson Brothers, Incorporated, they engaged in the garage, hardware and general mercantile business. As the officers and principal stockholders in other corporations, they operated soda refining plants, mineral water dispensaries and sundry mining concerns.

Failure of the Watterson banks wiped out the life savings of scores of Owens Valley citizens—men and



W. W. Watterson and (right) M. Q. Watterson, Owens Valley bankers, now serving terms in San Quentin after being found guilty of embezzling money from their depositors.

Any man desiring to borrow money for business developments or for any other purpose must look to these two men, since they operated the only banks in the Valley. A large proportion of the ranches in the Valley were mortgaged, and these mortgages, in almost every instance, were held by the Watterson brothers. In short, the Wattersons controlled the economic and financial life of Owens Valley. Because of this influential status, they likewise were able to mold the spoken opinions of a large share of the 7,000 inhabitants scattered throughout the country and in the four principal towns of the Valley.

Almost from the beginning of its operations in Owens Valley, the city of Los Angeles found itself openly or indirectly opposed by the Watterson brothers. These men explained their opposition to the various city programs and policies by declaring that they were thus attempting to protect the best interests of the citizens of the Valley. Officials of the city expressed the belief, in many instances, that the Wattersons were motivated by a desire to reap financial advantages for themselves rather than by purely altruistic impulses.

As grounds for this belief, officials of the city cited the conditions surrounding various controversies between themselves and Valley groups represented by the bankers.

When the city had offered to build a dam 100 feet high in Owens Gorge and thereby create a reservoir in Long Valley for the purpose of storing water for use by the Owens Valley ranchers, the Watterson brothers strenuously and successfully fought the project, it was pointed out. These two men had insisted that the city should build a dam 150 feet high, and the city engineers drew attention to the fact that construction of a 150-foot dam would necessitate the purchase by the city of several thousand acres of land in Long Valley at a price which was regarded as exorbitant.

During the spring and early summer of 1927, the Wattersons were active leaders in a bitter fight on the part of Valley townspeople to force Los Angeles to pay them "reparations" for damages alleged to have resulted from the purchase of ranch land by the city. The amounts demanded totaled approximately \$3,000,000, and of this total the Wattersons claim more than \$1,000,000. As the summer progressed, the demands for payment were emphasized by numerous dynamite attacks on the Aqueduct.

It was in the midst of this campaign for "reparations" that the Watterson's banks, on August 4, closed their doors. In printed

women who for years had been led to believe that the Watterson brothers were their best friends and greatest benefactors. (To be concluded next week)

Take A Tip from Santa

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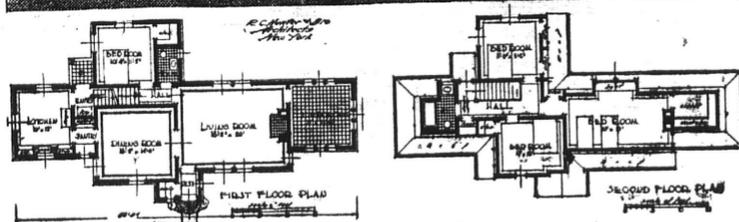
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Income Payments Delinquent Dec. 15

Collector of Internal Revenue, Helen H. Welch, calls attention to the fact that income tax payments for the fourth quarter of 1927 will be delinquent after Thursday, Dec. 15.

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